



Lifetime Connections to Literacy

A collection of literacy resources
for public libraries in Missouri

**Matt Blunt
Secretary of State
Missouri State Library**



For more information, contact:
Office of the Secretary of State
Missouri State Library
600 West Main Street
PO Box 387
Jefferson City, MO 65102



ROBIN CARNAHAN
SECRETARY OF STATE
STATE OF MISSOURI

JAMES C. KIRKPATRICK
STATE INFORMATION CENTER
(573) 751-4936

MISSOURI STATE LIBRARY
(573) 751-2751

February 2005

Dear Missouri Librarians:

Literacy skills are at the very foundation of our form of government. Informed and educated citizens are essential to representative democracy. Literacy is basic to the voting process, both in terms of allowing citizens to gather and use information about candidates and issues and in actually following instructions and casting a vote. Literacy affects almost all of the important issues in our lives. It is necessary for us as we support our families, become informed consumers, and avoid unscrupulous financial schemes. It is a health issue, and the health care system has a heightened awareness of the links between literacy, health, and healthy lifestyle management. The value of total literacy is high in this information age.

Overall, the literacy demands for productive and successful daily life are rising, yet we know too many of our fellow Missourians falter under those demands. Low-literate adults are too often unemployed, among the working poor, in need of social services, or part of the prison population. Many children with reading problems drop out, develop negative behavior, and suffer social and self-esteem problems. Even some people who can read are aliterate; that is, they can read but they do not. They never take advantage of the rich store of information and experience preserved in print, and so they are little better off than those who cannot read. Building literacy is an important task in every community.

Public libraries are natural partners in the quest for a more literate Missouri. By their very existence they are a force for literacy. Libraries support literacy development in their patrons, especially beginning readers. They nurture literacy activity in their communities and encourage those who can read to benefit from that skill. Libraries are rightly called "the people's university." They are effectively working to bridge the digital divide.

I am pleased that the State Library, which is part of the Secretary of State's Office, can offer this literacy notebook to the public libraries of Missouri to assist them as they increase their efforts in their communities.

Sincerely,

Robin Carnahan
Secretary of State

Acknowledgements

Libraries are naturally in the literacy business, and this volume is dedicated to the efforts libraries make in support of literacy. Those of you who are interested and involved in expanding the role of libraries in literacy will no doubt find this handbook useful in your efforts.

Much of the material in this handbook comes from Missouri experience. Missouri authors, librarians, and consultants wrote many of the activities. The Missouri State Library's former literacy consultant, Karen Jones, spent many, many hours researching and compiling the variety of materials found here. Before she left the State Library to develop the adult reading curriculum at a local college, Karen expressed her respect and admiration for the efforts put forth by libraries and her desire that libraries across the state would find this handbook to be a valuable tool for shaping their literacy work.

There were about three dozen people from approximately fifteen public libraries who attended meetings and reviewed drafts of this handbook. The State Library is grateful to those who offered their assistance, and wishes to thank all those who attended literacy gatherings or other meetings that helped to shape the content. Thanks also to people who support libraries, and to each of you who serve library patrons day by day.

The State Library is pleased to have Marge Kudrna, a retired school library media specialist from Jefferson City, as our new consultant for literacy issues. Marge is eager to use her wealth of experience to help shape the future of literacy efforts in Missouri libraries.

Perhaps you have seen a quote from Margaret Mead that says, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Here's to librarians who are making the world better for the individuals they serve.

Literacy Notebook Contents

The intent of this notebook is to help public libraries increase their literacy activity and focus. A series of meetings with public librarians gave it shape and organization. Participants agreed that this project should be a flexible set of resources rather than a treatise on literacy in libraries, that it should be more a toolkit than a textbook.

So, as defined in input meetings with public library staff members, this notebook offers a collection of ideas and resources. It is in loose-leaf form so librarians may use the pieces one at a time, reorganize the material for better local use, or add materials and notes as programming develops and new resources are discovered.

The sections, separated by dividers, are:

1. Introductory Notes About Literacy In Libraries
2. Introducing Literacy: Serving Preschoolers And Their Families
3. Supporting Reading Instruction: Serving Early Elementary School Students
4. Supporting Independent Reading: Serving Upper Elementary School Students
5. Creating Lifelong Readers: Serving Young Adults With Literacy In Mind
6. Second Chances At Literacy: Serving Low-Literate Adults
7. Appendices: More Resources And General Handouts

The notebook focuses on literacy for native speakers of English. Some activities will also support English language literacy for patrons learning English as a foreign language. Although low English proficiency produces problems similar to those caused by low literacy among English speakers, the causes of the two problems are different and the remedies are also rather different. Because of time and space constraints, the focus of this notebook is literacy for patrons who already speak English.

Organizational Notes

The notebook is organized primarily by age groups, since that is how we usually organize our library services. In each age group section there are three kinds of materials.

- Each section begins with notes for librarians. They offer a summary of literacy principles and ideas that might guide us as we support literacy from libraries. In some sections they include general information.
- The second kind of material offers ideas for activities and resources, and in some cases, sample plans for activities. The activity and resource sections for most age groups include ideas from public libraries in Missouri.
- The third set of pages in most sections is a group of reproducible handout masters. These reproducible information pages serve two purposes. First, they convey information to librarians in brief form. Second, they provide materials for patrons and attendees at library programs. Some of these handouts, particularly the ones for parents, contain the same information in different forms, and in a few cases the same handout is in two sections of the handbook if it applies to more than one age group. The reasoning for including both was that the same information might be useful more than once, the library might need handouts for more than one event on the same topic, or librarians might wish to choose between handouts on the same topic.
- An appendix includes some general information that applies to all age groups.

Pages are not numbered sequentially, although multi-page articles and information use the “page x of y ” numbering convention. As directed in input meetings, the information is in loose-leaf form so libraries can add, subtract, or rearrange information for best local use. The individually reproducible pages also account for the decision not to mark pages with numbers that would not make sense when a single page was reproduced.